

State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana (SSACI)

FAQs about the National Guard Supplemental Grant

Q: What is the difference between Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) and the National Guard Supplemental Grant (NGSG)?

A: The Army National Guard FTA is administered by the Guard and is paid directly to your college's Bursar's Office. The NGSG is a state grant administered by the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana (SSACI) and is handled through your college's Financial Aid Office. They are separate programs. Both Air and Army National Guard students are eligible for the NGSG but only Army National Guard students are eligible for the FTA. If you have questions about the FTA, contact the Army Guard directly.

Q: I have the NGSG. Might I be eligible for other state grants?

A: Maybe. Depending on your financial need, you could have a Frank O'Bannon Higher Education Award (HEA) in addition to the NGSG. The HEA is awarded independent of the fact you are in the Guard. If you have an HEA, the NGSG makes up the difference in covered tuition and fees; if not, the NGSG covers the tuition.

Q: I received a bill from my college. Why isn't the NGSG paying 100% of my tuition and fees?

A: The state will cover *up to* 100% of certain tuition and fees. Like all other state grants such as the HEA, the NGSG covers only fees that are assessed to all students independent of program. It does not cover special fees such as lab fees. Moreover, at schools that charge by the credit hour, the NGSG only covers tuition up to 15 credit hours per semester. Any charges beyond those limits are your responsibility.

Q: I have other benefits because I am in the Indiana National Guard such as the GI Bill, VA Benefits, or an enlistment "kicker." Does SSACI handle those too?

A: No, SSACI does not. SSACI handles the NGSG and HEA and only those. Talk with the Guard or the VA about any other benefits.

Q: I was called to active duty while in school. What should I do?

A: You should talk to your academic advisor and the Financial Aid Office *immediately*. Schools have different policies but in most cases the school will retroactively withdraw you from all classes for the semester and cancel all your tuition and fee charges (and maybe room and board costs too). Taking incompletes in all classes might be an option but it is not advised. At a minimum, the school will require a copy of your orders before they can do anything. Ask and follow their directions completely.

Q: Are there filing deadlines for the state's National Guard Supplemental Grant (NGSG)?

A: Yes. You must file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) by March 10th of each year and correct any errors on the FAFSA by June 10th. In addition each branch of the Guard (Air and Army) has its own paperwork and filing deadlines for the NGSG. Check with your education officer or unit commander for more information. You must satisfy both SSACI and Guard deadlines.

Q: Are there exceptions to the state filing deadlines?

A: There are but they are limited. If you were on active duty (state or federal) during the filing periods and unable to file or fix your FAFSA, deadlines may be waived. You would have to write a letter to SSACI and request the deadlines be waived. Include with the letter copies of official DOD documentation such as your DD214 or orders and preferably both. Exceptions for other reasons are rare.

Q: I was deployed on active duty and checked I was veteran on the FAFSA but the federal government couldn't verify it. I received a comment code (codes 161, 162, 173, or 180 are typical) telling me I have to talk to my college's Financial Aid Office. What do I do?

A: Take your DD214 to the Financial Aid Office of your college ASAP. If you meet a minimal set of criteria, the college will verify your veteran status and that will make you an *independent* student. As an independent student you will not need parental information on the FAFSA. Note that going to basic or advanced training is not sufficient to be declared a veteran.

Q: My college says I have some state grants but not the NGSG. What should I do?

A: First, go to <http://www.in.gov/ssaci/estudent/> and see if you have been allocated the grant at the college you are currently attending. If you have, print a copy of the award and take it to the Financial Aid Office of your college. If not, check ASAP with your unit commander or readiness resource officer to make sure the Guard has certified you for the grant. See the next Q&A too.

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Q: I know I have the NGSG but my college says SSACI has not sent my money to them. What do I do?

A: SSACI doesn't send money to the colleges; the colleges claim the grants. SSACI sends grant notices to colleges every week during the school year. You should first check <http://www.in.gov/ssaci/estudent/> to see if the college you attend is *listed as the first choice college*. If not, follow the instructions to change it immediately. If it is first and the award was very recently created or you very recently changed your college choice, please allow the college 1-2 weeks to receive and respond to the information from SSACI.

Q: I had the NGSG in the fall but my college says I don't have it now. What should I do?

A: The Guard re-certifies students each and every semester. Check ASAP with your education officer or unit commander to make sure the Guard re-certified you for the spring semester. Without the certification you cannot receive the NGSG. Don't forget that you must file a FAFSA and re-apply for the NGSG each and every year too.

Q: I can see that SSACI has awarded me the NGSG, but the college says that I need to submit more documentation. Do I have to comply with their request?

A: Yes. You may be selected for a process called Verification by the college or the federal government. If selected, you must submit any requested documentation to the college ASAP before they can claim any financial aid including your NGSG. If you fail to submit the requested documents within the requested timeframe you can lose your NGSG and all other state and federal aid too.

Q: Do I have to have a certain grade point average in order to qualify for the NGSG?

A: Yes. You must be within the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards as defined by your college in order to qualify for the NGSG. Those standards include a minimum GPA as well as other criteria, for example, that you pass a minimum number of credit hours. Ask your college for a copy of their SAP standards. The college cannot claim the NGSG on your behalf if you have failed to meet these standards.

Q: I had a state grant before I joined the Guard. Does that award count as part of my 8 semesters of aid that must be used in a 10 year period?

A: Yes. Students must use all state grants within a ten year period when any state grant (NGSG or other grant) is first used. Students can receive a total of eight semesters of state aid in any combination including any state grants used prior to, concurrently with, or after the NGSG.

Q: Can I get the NGSG if I go to college part-time?

A: Yes. The NGSG can be used for part-time enrollment as well as full-time enrollment. Check with your college Financial Aid Office about using the NGSG for part-time enrollment. Part-time grants do count towards your 8 semesters of aid but only half as much as a full-time grant.

Q: I am in the Guard and also a 21st Century Scholar. Can I get both grants at the same time?

A: No. Both the 21st Century Scholarship and the NGSG cover the same tuition so you can have only one. As a rule if you are going to college full-time, you will receive the 21st Scholarship. *But if you go part-time*, contact SSACI ASAP and have the 21st Scholarship temporarily deactivated and the NGSG activated. The NGSG can be used part-time but the 21st Scholarship can not.

Q: Will I get my NGSG as soon as the Guard certifies me as eligible?

A: Not quite. It might take 1-2 weeks for SSACI to process your information from the Guard and notify the college. Moreover, SSACI might need more information from your college before it can create the grant. For example, at colleges with different tuitions for new and continuing students, SSACI must know your status; or SSACI might be waiting for the college to clear corrections it made to your FAFSA. You should first check the status of your grant on-line at <http://www.in.gov/ssaci/estudent/> and then with your college's Financial Aid Office. Be patient but check your status too.

Q: Can I use the NGSG in the summer? Can I use it for just one semester a year?

A: No, the NGSG can be used only in the fall and spring semesters and not the summer. Yes, you can use it one semester at a time but if you do, you still have to file and correct the FAFSA each year by the state deadlines. And the semesters you skipped are counted as part of your ten years of eligibility, that is, you must use all your state aid within ten years of when you first received any state grant. However, a skipped semester does not count against the limit of 8 semesters of aid.